THE TWO YEMENS:

Historical Perspectives and Present Attitudes

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Lecture to the Royal Central Asian Society on November 1, 1972, shortly after the announcement that talks were to take place between the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Republic of South Yemen. Dr. Serjeant, Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, first went to Aden in 1940 to study Arabic dialects, and subsequently served in the Aden Protectorate Government Guards. Joining the BBC, he became Editor of the *Arabic Listener*. He has travelled widely in Moslem countries, including two journeys in Royalist Yemen during the Egyptian War there, and has since spent some time in the Yemen Arab Republic. His publications include *Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt*, *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast*, and in the press, *The South Arabian Hunt*.

AFTER World War I, the Turkish withdrawal left the Yemen and districts of the Aden Protectorate the Turkish forces had occupied, in a sort of tribal anarchy. The Zaidi Imam Yahya, who had been the centre of resistance to the Turks, had the prestige of resisting the invader as well as the honour of his descent from the Prophet to aid him in his *conquest* of what now constitutes the Yemen, especially the Shafi'i south. He was supported by the hardy northern tribes and aided by the powerful Wazir Saiyid family. He went on to occupy tribal districts of the Aden Protectorate which for a time were neglected by the sluggish policy of post-war Britain. Eventually the British forced him to withdraw, and, themselves, in the later 'thirties, began to penetrate the protected districts partly to keep out the Imam and Italians, partly because they might contain oil.

To understand the Yemen today one must know something of Imam Yahya and his son Imam Ahmad who, after their fashion, served the Yemen well. In his conquests in SW Arabia Yahya simply took what he could get, and the British did more or less the same, by political or other means. It would be pointless to examine their conflicting territorial claims, but the tribespeople in such case as they were confronted with a choice of overlords tended to prefer the British, who did not tax but subsidized them; nor did they send British troops to occupy their country. The Imam on the contrary was obliged to tax the southern Shafi'i south of the Yemen, organized in villages rather than tribes, which had been subject to many conquerors over the centuries.

The Imam had a necessary function in the Yemen as an independent arbiter between the tribes who simply would not submit to domination by others. One way or another it has always really been the tribes, or those they support, that have dominated South West Arabia, and its cities and ports like Aden, when these latter have not been in foreign hands. But, as an arbiter, an Imam has no fixed tribe or family to support him, and consequently, like his distinguished ancestor Muhammad, he has to play one group off against another to remain himself on top. Imams Yahya and Ahmad played this political game consummately well.

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The dry east or Mashriq of the Yemen, and to some extent the north, can only support a limited population, but their fine fighting men must have an outlet. This was achieved by granting small chiefs, and their tribal soldier followers, districts in the south where they were set to collect the taxes, and by recruitment of tribesmen into the armies. Naturally the northerners made the best of their opportunities, and the southern peasant complained of their harshness and exactions, as also of the Imam's corrupt government officials. To keep the tribes themselves in order – to clip their nails as Yemeni writers say – the Imam could use one tribe to punish a recalcitrant tribe and plunder it, or he could send the army against them. Imam Ahmad used both methods. But if army officers became too powerful they could also be a menace to the Imam. Imam Ahmad had observed military coups elsewhere in Arab countries, so he kept a tight control of ammunition, and he is even said to have kept essential parts for tanks under his bed. I do not know how true this is, but he certainly controlled military supplies to something like this extent.

Another element potentially dangerous to the ruling house was the Saiyid families, who had tribal allegiance paid to them in their own districts and who could be candidates for the Imamate – the Zaidi Imamate is not fixed by descent in one family. Yahya somehow broke the power of these families. After his clash with the powerful Wazir family in the mid-thirties his son Ahmad became the most powerful ruler in southern Yemen and even defied his father. Imam Ahmad, a prominent Yemeni told me, knew the Yemen like a chessboard – if there was firing on his son al-Badr's house at night in San'a' he knew it was by the tribal Khawlanis of Naji al-Ghadir instigated by the Sharaf al-Din Saiyids. Ahmad struck back hard at any outbreak of lawlessness. This is typical of the complexity of political manoeuvre in the Yemen.

Inevitably however, though he kept the heads of troublemakers down, the Imam made enemies, often temporary but sometimes permanent. Some were prepared to intrigue with foreigners against him. Moreover the large Yemeni emigrant populations in Aden, Ethiopia, and later Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, enjoyed better economic conditions than the Yemen could offer, and they began to ask why the Yemen did not enjoy the same. The emigrants were almost entirely Shafi'is from the southern districts. Despite Imam Yahya's rigid isolationism, ideas that taxation could be less oppressive, more education could be provided, and various sections of the population have an advisory say in government, began to permeate into the Yemen. The Liberals (*Ahrar*) holding these ideas took refuge in Aden in 1944 – their leaders were two men of the Qadi class, to some extent rivals of the Saiyids, but some Saiyids also joined them. These Liberals linked up with the Wazir family smarting under their loss of power. In early 1947, when I was in Hadramawt, we were startled to hear that Imam Yahya had been assassinated, travelling in a single car with only a couple of soldiers as escort. 'Abdullah al-Wazir was proclaimed Imam – essentially, of course, it was a dynastic quarrel, and the Aden-based Liberals had little to do with the revolt.

Yahya's son Ahmad, leaving Ta'izz, the southern capital, soon rallied the tribes to him and took San'a'. He caught the rebels and executed the

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ringleaders, but imprisoned the rest at Hajjah. Propaganda has painted Imam Ahmad as a monster but he was a relatively clement ruler – and the murder of his father Yahya was unpopular. Ahmad nearly lost his throne when in 1955 he faced a mutiny of soldiers whom he had disciplined for looting a village. He also had troubles with the powerful northern Hashid chief and the Khawlanis in the east. He nearly lost his life in March 1961 in an assassination attempted for obscure reasons. Despite the ideology later constructed upon these attempts and insurrections, the motives of the attackers were varied and opportunist rather than idealistic – in fact such disturbances are normal incident in south Arabia. Ahmad's imprisonments were in some ways disciplinary. When the rebels had cooled their heads in Hajjah prison they were released, and many of them re-employed by Ahmad. Today many Yemeni politicians, one might say, are graduates of Hajjah.

The 'fifties and 'sixties saw the rise of Nasser and growth of Nasserism – that is, furthering the interests of Egyptian imperialism and the Nasser clique under the cloak of nationalism and socialism, the propagation of Nasserist doctrine by immensely effective radio and other mass media, intrigue against rulers of other Arab states, especially the Hashimites, the development of a network of intelligence agents outside Egypt, in the Arab states, and a police-state within it. Arabia was quite unprepared to counter Nasserist subversion, and the arrival of the transistor radio made the situation worse. Nasser also sheltered every malcontent from the Yemen and Aden, encouraging them to work against their regimes from Cairo.

Imam Ahmad pursued an anti-British policy which, in 1954, developed into support of Protectorate dissidents to create disorder within its borders, and discourage British efforts to build up a federal state; but by the time the Federation came about there, in 1959, he had begun to realize that his true enemy was not the British but Nasser, with whom he had agreed the Yemen should enter the UAR.

Meanwhile, after the 1955 attempt, Ahmad had decided to make his son al-Badr heir-apparent, though the Hamid al-Din family would have backed Ahmad's brother Hasan. This caused a grave split in the family's ranks that, basically, is the reason for their losing the Imamate. Imam al-Badr is a gentle intelligent personality with a quiet charm of manner but lacking the toughness of his father and grandfather in dealing with the rough Yemeni political game.

Al-Badr toured Europe in 1956 – he visited Nasser who appears to have won him over, and he opened up relations with Russia which resulted in equipping the Yemeni army with Russian weapons. Al-Badr then embarked on a programme of development. Now even Imam Yahya, but Ahmad much more, did embark on some development of roads, schools and hospitals, but Yahya hoarded money and Ahmad is criticized for building castles. Their efforts inevitably contrasted poorly with development in Aden, but the Yemen had in fact little money to spare as the first Republicans soon discovered when they tried to govern it. Former Imamate officials told me there were sums amounting to a total of only about £8 million in the treasuries at the 1962 *coup d'état*. Even in Turkish

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days the Yemen had to import foodstuffs, and it was getting ever less self-sufficient in food. It has few exportable commodities, so people turned from cultivating coffee, which was fetching poor prices, to the easier and more profitable *qāt*. Remittances from emigrants were important to the economy. Badr negotiated Russian, Chinese, French and American aid and German agricultural expertise. Some main roads were built – later these only helped to speed the Egyptian occupation, as did the development of the port of Hodeidah which was modernized and can berth a number of ships.

Al-Badr's journeys also brought Egyptian experts to the Yemen – especially to the Military Academy. Young officers went to Egypt for a special course of military training run for political objectives, not of the same standard as Egyptian cadets. Many Yemenis in Cairo for education joined anti-Imamic organizations. Al-Badr, to maintain himself against his uncle Hasan, despatched as Yemeni ambassador to the USA, leaned on Egyptian support, and he thought the young Egyptian-trained officers would back him against conservative support in the Yemen for Hasan.

By one of those unfortunate chances of history Imam Ahmad had accidentally become a morphine addict and had to go to Italy for treatment in 1959. He recovered, but after he was wounded in Hodeidah at the 1961 attempt on his life, the drugs given him to relieve the pain seem to have brought back the addiction. For this reason he seems to have been incapable of action, though he was well aware of the intrigues going on around him. During Ahmad's last year of life, Nasser had intensified his campaign against Arab monarchs and against the Hashimites in particular. Disaffected Yemeni political parties had taken up the anti-Hashimite cry which previously was unheard in the country, opposing south Arabians to north Arabian Saiyids notwithstanding the fact that the latter had been settled in the Yemen for about a thousand years. Anwar Sadat, who appears to have been responsible to Nasser for the Yemen, worked against the regime through his agent, Baidani, who made scurrilous attacks on Imam Ahmad; but this so-called expert on the Yemen probably misled Nasser into thinking the Yemen would, militarily speaking, be a "push-over". Baidani's published economic account of the Yemen, like that of al-ʿAttar is mainly fiction and propaganda, following Nasserite socialistic themes.

After Ahmad's death in September 1962, al-Badr was doublecrossed when the Egyptian *chargé d'affaires* pushed a handful of young Egyptian-trained officers into attacking his house. Frightened at the consequences, they all too hastily called in the Egyptians, already prepared for this eventuality, and five years of war resulted. President Sallal who was not in the coup, but pushed into leadership by the officers, used to say to them at first in his coarse way – which gives a very good idea of what many thought of this young officer coup: "Revolution? What revolution? You've made a mess and I have to clear it up!" Most Yemenis, especially the more responsible Republican politicians, were speedily disillusioned with the Egyptians who tried to impose colonial rule on them, and introduced a cruel Intelligence system. In 1969 I heard a Republican song in am-Turbah which ran something like – "you say you came to free us, but

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with what, with branding and electric torture?" When the Egyptians went they left practically no trace behind them, as a Yemeni said to me last summer, but heaps of rusty cans and shattered villages.

In early 1968 the Royalists besieged San'a' cutting it off from supplies for six weeks, but their failure to take it lost them the war. This was not so much a Republican victory as the outcome of acute rivalry between al-Badr and the princes which inhibited joint action, coupled with the attitude of the Royalist tribes who wanted the war to go on without a decisive victory to either side, so that they would continue to receive money and arms. Relieving forces, said by some to include NLF from Hugariyah, and former FLOSY supporters, came up from Hodeidah and Ta'izz respectively. Russian and Syrian pilots bombed the Royalists, but air action in itself was perhaps less important than ground action. A few years later leading Royalists made a concordat with the Republic under Saudi aegis and joined the Government in San'a'. So today Royalist or Republican is not an issue, but the Royalist tribes who withdrew – they were not really defeated – remain *de facto* independent of the San'a' Government governing themselves through their shaikhs and paying it no taxes.

Last February the Khawlanis, who had distinguished themselves by their spirited resistance to the Egyptian invaders, but obstinately refused to come to terms with the Republic, met with representatives of the Aden NLF Government at Baihan, attracted by offers of money and arms. By an act of the grossest treachery their leaders, including the celebrated Naji al-Ghadir, were poisoned, blown up by mines laid underneath their tents, or mown down by machine-guns. The vindictive Marxist NLF hatred for Zaidi tribal chiefs found an outlet here, but it was bad policy for the NLF, though it may tie in with Russian policy antagonistic to shaikhs and tribal people in general.

At the time of the relief of San'a' in 1968, the Russians were very much in the picture, and for several years their advisers continued to be influential in the Yemen. Confrontation of the moderates with the Yemeni Left however came when the Aden born Hugari, 'Abd al-Raqib, commander of the *Sa'iqah* (Storm Troops) and Head of Staff, a man with Chinese links, exiled in 1968 to Algiers, returned in 1969 and fought it out in San'a' along with his leftist, mainly Hugari, officers. He was killed in the street fighting and the moderates appear to have won. 'Abd al-Raqib was played along by the Russians, and half of the Army, the *Sa'iqah* and Parachutists in particular, was with him; the others, like Hada tribesmen, with the Republic opposed to the Leftists. Since then the Republic has veered away from the communist bloc. President Iryani, although he was involved in conspiracies against the Imam, is essentially of a traditional outlook, a man of the Qadi class, respected by the tribes who would never accept Sallal, both, I think, because of his poor personality and mean birth. Iryani anyway had been a high official under Imam Ahmad himself.

The Army has still perhaps an over-prominent place in the Republic – inevitably – but it has undergone a significant change. About two to three years ago a Russian officer attached to the Yemen Army, a man close to the Russian ambassador, attempted to incite Army personnel against the shaikhs, to throw them off, praising the communist NLF Government in

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Aden, and advocating alignment with it. This Russian had made himself expert in tribal names and groupings – he knew who the shaikhs were, and how things work in the tribes. However, since then, the Haraki officers, – i.e. those linked with George Habash and Nayif Hawatimah in Lebanon who were in the Armoured units and *Sa'iqah* – have largely been replaced by officers drawn from shaikhly houses. The shaikhs are a strongly conservative and, on the whole, responsible element, and seem most influential in the present Republic. The Russian advisers have not been expelled, but are said to be insulated, as it were, from the troops. In the autumn of 1971 the Yemeni Premier visited Russia, doubtless to obtain new Russian equipment, replacements and spare parts, but returned empty-handed. The Russians, one infers, must have decided to put their money on their communist NLF friends in Aden, and deliberately to leave the Yemen weak.

The Yemeni Government is mainly composed of northern Republican Zaidis. This is probably not very palatable to the Shafi'i south – indeed the policy of the Aden Hugari Marxists is to take advantage of this to infiltrate these areas with a view to separating the Shafi'i districts from the Zaidi north. Against this of course Shafi'i Yemenis see the daily spectacle of refugees arriving from Aden with first-hand accounts of the appalling situation there and their own sufferings. In the south frontier provinces of the Yemen the Army is said to be billeted on peasants, much as in Imamic days, and to take what it needs, at times, from local people so that they do, to some extent, become disaffected, particularly perhaps in the Hugariyah district where they may even be sympathetic to the Aden NLF. The Yemen Army, confronted by the NLF Army, is of doubtful reliability, since it still does have some Ba'thists and others among the officers.

The economic situation is also uncertain. Former Royalist tribes pay no tithes, but at least one Republican tribe also pays none. In some cases a former Royalist tribe has agreed to pay taxes in return for a service such as schools. As Shafi'i tribes assess their own tithes, this source of revenue has greatly diminished. The economy must depend largely on emigrant remittances, and also on foreign aid, but as Yemeni officials themselves are sceptical of their own statistics it may not be easy to assess the position very accurately. It is a healthy sign that the Yemeni press can inveigh against bribery and corruption among Government officials, and that the Premier can admit that salaries are inadequate to eliminate them.

One may criticize the Yemen Republic, but there are things more important to say in its favour. Firstly there is a great degree of freedom, and one can speak openly without fear of the secret police – one finds nothing like the dreaded Egyptian Intelligence or the Aden Ogpu–Gestapo. Not infrequently one hears people praising the days of Imam Ahmad – though there are also critics of those times – without fear of reprisal. The Government has not set its face against traditional culture, nor does it attempt to make Yemenis conform to ideologies by such actions as forcibly tearing the veils off womenfolk and killing their men if they resist, as one hears is done in South Yemen. *People are not afraid* as they are in the south. If business is sometimes hampered by having to pay squeeze to the Army or others, at least merchants *can* carry on their businesses – witness the flight of the Aden merchants to Hodeidah, Ta'izz and San'a',

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and the active development of trade. Above all, the Republican Government is not doctrinaire, and its intentions are benevolent – it is ready, even eager, to learn. In the country there is a sort of political balance. As a Yemeni Shafi'i said to me, the Army is afraid to clash with the tribes, and the tribes with the Army – both are afraid of the "educated youth", namely the politically indoctrinated of the towns, who in turn lack the force to confront either. So if economic potentialities in the Yemen are limited it is yet a country of hope.

Let me turn now to the former Aden Protectorates – the People's Republic of South Yemen.

Only in the 'fifties, especially after the rise of Nasser, did Aden really begin to enter into Middle Eastern politics, though purely local issues remained paramount. Pacification of the western tribal districts was at first not unpopular, though it had been far easier in Hadramawt than in the Western Protectorate, where it was subject to Yemeni interference, then Egyptian propaganda, followed by attacks from the British Left.

In Aden colony, as a step towards self-government, a Legislative Council was established and local elections introduced. Aden, however, had large numbers of temporary immigrants from the Yemen which could not support its growing population, and the British, reasonably enough, restricted the franchise to Aden-born, though this restriction was gradually much eased. During this period, under a Conservative Government, grew up the Trades Union movement – Government inviting a British TUC member to help advise the unions. Regrettably however, Asnag, leader of the PSP (People's Socialist Party) chose to make an issue over the franchise for Yemeni workers, and his group of politicians had come under the influence of Nasserite nationalist-socialist ideas. His writings demanded immediate unity with Nasserite Egypt – this diametrically opposed to British interests. The PSP group called strikes that seriously damaged Aden's trade, and there was an attack on the Tawahi Police Station in which several persons were killed. It is all the more unfortunate that the British Labour Party should have persistently encouraged Asnag, who remained in close touch with it. A sort of trades disputes act,* introduced in 1960 to stop crippling strikes, worked quite well, but was the target of the uninformed and irresponsible Left in Britain as well as of the PSP.

Meanwhile the British set up a Federation in the West Aden Protectorate, acting through the treaty chiefs – it is difficult to imagine how they could have proceeded any other way. The objective was to create a viable political unit against Imam Ahmad's expansionist tendencies, and maintain a security that would allow of such little development of the area as is possible. The press still uses the Nasserite catchword "feudal" of these chiefs, which the British Left adopted; but the chiefs were anything but feudal – they were elected by their tribes from the chiefly families and had only their own limited land-holdings. The same Nasserite term "feudal" was also applied, entirely inaccurately, to Imamic Yemen. Certainly British support of the chiefs upset the natural balance of south Arabian society, but only in Lahej and Abyan did chiefly families acquire large areas of land. Land is always a sensitive question in south Arabia. Non-

* Industrial Relations (Conciliation and Arbitration) Ordinance, August 1960.

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tribal peasants had a fairly hard lot, like peasants in other Arab countries, but land seems mostly to have been held by tribal owners who worked it themselves. In any case the peasants had little to do with political agitation against the British or Federation.

Imam Ahmad, the Egyptians, and Aden politicians opposed the federation of the tribal districts. Though, earlier, Aden politicians had railed against the so-called "separationist" policy, asserting the British wanted to part Aden from its hinterland, they also opposed the logical next step. The Protectorate Federation was a success, so the British proposed to bring Aden Colony itself into the Federation. This was not to the Aden politicians' liking because they feared to be swamped by the Protectorate group. Yet the two elements might conceivably have settled down to work out and modify their Federation had it not been for agitation against it in Britain and the Egyptian invasion of the Yemen in late 1962, coinciding with the adhesion of Aden to the Federation. To the Yemenis in Aden the Egyptian contrived coup in San'a' appeared spontaneous and the realization of all the claims of the Cairo "Voice of the Arabs". Only slowly did disillusion with the bitter reality of the Egyptian occupation come to them.

In 1963 the Egyptian C.-in-C. 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amir, held a meeting with various Aden Protectorate dissidents, including Qahtan al-Sha'bi, men who had failed to obtain office or been removed from it. My Fadli tribal informant, who was present at this meeting, said that 'Amir told them to go and fight in the Federation, promising them grenades, mines, rifles, light automatics, etc., but he stated that the Egyptians would not use planes against the British nor attack the Protectorates in support of any action the dissidents took to "liberate" them. When, however, they had been fighting for some time, Egypt would attack Great Britain in UNO on their behalf.

In late September of 1964 I recall one could still go anywhere about Aden without apprehension, and the real terrorist action started only about the end of that year. It was mainly carried on by what we now know as the NLF group – the National Liberation Front. A recent Arab writer says, "A time came in 1965, in which opposition to the NLF meant standing up to Egyptian Intelligence – and the meaning of that is that a man will lose his head – and since many people want to keep their heads on their shoulders they took refuge in silence."

Today it is still relevant to ask – who were the NLF? It is also relevant to ask what part the British had in bringing them into power and what did they know of the NLF's communist core.

The NLF claims it revolted on October 14, 1963, when British forces killed a Radfan Qutaibi called Labuzah. This appears to be untrue. Labuzah was not NLF, and the cause for which he rose was an old one – resistance to the attempt to force the Qutaibis to come under the Amir of Dali'.* In fact the NLF terrorist group was formed about February 1964,

* As long ago as 1904 the British Political Officer in Dali' reported that, "The Qutaibis are not really dependents of the Amīr at all." However, the Bombay Government, in a somewhat equivocal letter to Aden, seems to imply that it will not recognize the Qutaibis as independent of the Amīr (1905). R. L. Bidwell (edit.), *Foreign Office Confidential print: the affairs of Arabia 1905–1906*, London, 1971, I, II, 102; II, IV, 77.

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to wage guerrilla war on the Algerian pattern. According to the NLF "National Charter", a crude, immature Marxist document, the NLF was first composed of seven groups. The Haraki, or George Habash group, contained most of the 500 NLF members – their numbers were always very small; the others, all dignified by high-sounding names, included some Aden policemen, a few Army adherents, some Yemeni Nasserites, and a few Yafi'is, but like the Asnag group they were mainly urban. Later some Hugaris from Yemen joined them and an Aden schoolboy group. In September 1965 the Aden Security authorities captured NLF documents uncovering NLF cells and showing that the Egyptians controlled the Front, which was based on Ta'izz – they stated that the Front's strength was weakening and its position deteriorating. The British followed this up by arresting twenty-nine of its members. The NLF was eclipsed – alas only temporarily – and security incidents dwindled to a very small number.

The founder of the Aden NLF was Faisal 'Abd al-Latif al-Sha'bi, of a tribal shaikhly family with a land grievance against Lahej. Not finding government employment in Aden he developed even more the anti-British and anti-Sultanic "chip on his shoulder" – his mother, too, was an Indian, a waif. In Cairo in 1955 he met George Habash, at that time a Nasserite socialist (later, of course, a communist or near communist) and joined his group which included Ahmad al-Khatib still settled in Kuwait but not Kuwaiti born, and 'Abdullah Shamlan of Bahrain, a Shi'i and so probably also with a grievance – he appears to have had something to do with the 1965 school riots there, the tail-end of which I saw at the time. In 1958 in Aden Faisal met a clandestine labour organization opposed to Asnag's TUC on account of its links with the British, and because the members were bitterly jealous of the superior standing of the adherents of Asnag, to some extent an elite, successful graduates and others. Scholastically the NLF were all failures whether at school or university, and this group was mainly Government employees in the lower grades or elementary teachers. I am told that even before this, however, the Habash group was sending agents "to create consciousness', not to recruit members, but carefully to select likely individuals to indoctrinate. Subversive literature was supplied them from the Beirut HQ, but the utmost care taken to stop them reading Nasserite or Ba'thist literature. Typical was a book, probably *Les damnés de la terre*, described as dealing with French atrocities in Algiers, written it seems by a black Marxist anti-colonialist from Martinique. They also studied the *Sayings of Mao*. The so-called NLF cultural wing concentrated on school-children and lower-grade teachers who in turn taught communist ideas to the Aden-born Yemenis of Hugariyah. Later these children were sometimes used to throw grenades at £5 a time, but now and then, horrified with the situation into which he had been tricked, a boy would come weeping with his weapons to British Intelligence; this led to some discoveries of weapon caches. In Cairo, Faisal al-Sha'bi recruited Hugaris at school there, sent with meagre stipends from the Yemen, and would invite them on days off to chicken and beer! In those years there were many small advantages in Nasser's Egypt for a person joining political groups. The NLF mentality, then, developed from reading in a strictly circumscribed Marxist-cum-extreme-

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nationalist range of books, through which a special mental world is created that appears normal to the readers, but absurd, even insane, to others. In general the young NLF adherents were very mixed up, and their second-rate intellectual ability coupled with poor education probably rendered them the more susceptible to this propaganda.

The Habash group in Cairo in 1958 included also the Hugari Yemeni 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il and Salimin Rubaiya' a non-tribal teacher with a strongly developed class hatred, but Qahtan al-Sha'bi only joined some years later. It also had al-'Akbari, from a small tribe near Mukalla; an extreme leftist from a prominent Saiyid family, Faisal 'Ali al-'Attas, who had failed at Aden College; a teacher, Saiyid 'Abdullah Ba Faqih, whom I remember as held responsible for organizing subversion in Ghail Ba Wazir School at the time of my visit in 1957, and an al-Bid Saiyid. 'Attas is said to have imbibed Marxism in Indonesia, and to have had close contacts with the British Hadrami Bedouin Legion. The Hadrami NLF seem to have been intellectually somehat superior to those of Aden, but no less violent and cruel.

In late 1964 Egypt stepped up the terrorist campaign, coinciding with a great push in northern Yemen which petered out the following year. In 1964 also, in Britain, Labour won the election by a narrow majority, and Asnag sent a stream of complaints to Greenwood and the Labour Party stating that the High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, was the obstacle to an agreement with the PSP. This seems to have been used as a pretext for dismissing Trevaskis, the architect of Federation, and, if only by virtue of experience alone, clearly the person who knew best how to manage it.

By August 1965 the situation in South Arabia had changed in favour of Britain, Saudi Arabia, the Royalists, and the Federation. Nasser's large army, deployed in posts all over the Yemen, was exposed to constant Royalist attack, and the Republicans had grown ever more open in opposition to Egyptian occupation of their country. Nasser had to treat for peace with King Faisal and accept the withdrawal terms of the Jeddah Treaty. British Security, as I have said, had dealt the NLF in Aden a severe blow. Harold Wilson chose this moment to horse-trade Aden (so one hears), for the support of his Labour Left on a measure unpopular with it. It was probably agreed in autumn 1965 to abandon Aden, but this was not made public; yet it is likely that Egyptian Intelligence in London quickly got wind of the decision, months before it was revealed in Aden. There were indications that Nasser had intended to implement his agreement to quit the Yemen, but his policy showed swift signs of change. The peace conference of Yemenis at Harad at the end of the year was brought to nothing. Egyptian troops were concentrated in the San'a'–Ta'izz–Hodeidah "Box", and Royalist tribes neutralized as far as possible by unheralded daily bombings of defenceless villages. In January 1966 Egyptian Intelligence attempted to form a united anti-British front known as FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of "Occupied" South Yemen) at Ta'izz, and the Egyptian Intelligence Commander there, 'Izzat Sulaiman, is reported as saying that the British were of no concern – they were leaving – the real question was who should come after them? Egyptian officers boasted

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openly what British houses they would take over when their troops entered Aden.

Most NLF refused to join FLOSY and its military wing, known as PORF (Popular Organization of Revolutionary Forces) – of which Makkawi (who had left Aden after his brush with the British over the murder of Sir Arthur Charles) became nominal commander, to be joined by Asnag on the political side. Both had been threatened by the Egyptians with murder earlier in the summer if they came to an agreement with the British during the London Conference that year. FLOSY adherents of the professional classes have assured me that, if PORF had won, they, as a group, would have had short shrift from it. Faisal al-Sha'bi ran away from the Yemen and though most NLF were prisoners in Mansurah Detention Camp he started up NLF activity again.

Lord Beswick's revelation in February 1966 of Labour's decision to the Federal leaders and their British advisers brought an explosion of wrath from them, but the Federal rulers were manoeuvred into a position of seeming acquiescence. The declaration made, it became imperative for all in the Federation to guess the winners and get on to the bandwagon in time to survive. Labour hostility to the rulers was patently clear. Were this not enough, London compelled the Federation to accept a UNO Mission in spring 1967, in the teeth of its opposition and that of the High Commission. The very Mission itself was completely biased and bitterly hostile to the Federation. The UNO resolutions that London forced the Federation to accept were utterly unrealistic, its attack on the Federation insulting, and its request that Britain remove the base impertinent. The Mission's eventual rejection by all sides only increased the tension in Aden.

It appears that certain circles in Aden in early 1967 began to think of supporting the then weak but compactly organized NLF against FLOSY. If 'Awbali's account is to be credited, the British were in touch with the NLF leaders in Sir Richard Turnbull's day, and subsidizing them though Turnbull was opposed to this. The British assuredly knew of the link with George Habash as they had captured papers, by chance, from his Aden agent, a Jordanian insurance man. I find it difficult to credit Lord Trevelyan's assertion of the NLF, "Their enemies alleged that they had communist affiliations, *but of this there was no hard evidence*". About the time of the UNO Mission, the Labour Government sent out the Shackleton Mission apparently briefed, or so it seemed to British observers, that if it did a deal with Asnag and Makkawi all would be well. Care was taken in Aden that Lord Shackleton should meet some fairly prominent NLF members secretly in Little Aden and Shuqra, probably including Faisal al-Sha'bi. A FLOSY ex-officer gave me details of proposals said to have been made to FLOSY which would have amounted to handing over to it, but FLOSY's conditions were too many to accept. Those in contact with the Shackleton Mission formed the impression that its members considered it axiomatic that the Federation would not work; it was pointed out to the Mission that this was not necessarily so. It would be interesting if one could see the Shackleton Report, but it probably recommended continued support of the Federation – in view of Lord George-Brown's astonishing decision of June 19, 1967, to give the Federation full military

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support – but this decision may partly have come about through the visit, shortly before the June War, of King Faisal to ask Harold Wilson not to abandon Aden. It is tragic that the Brown decision came too late. South Arabia was torn by conflicting emotions at the rout of Nasser's forces in Sinai, and on the 20th a mutiny broke out in the Army and Police in which British soldiers were murdered in a horribly bestial fashion, and the terrorists took over Aden Crater. Incorrect reports were put out about the mutiny which was largely tribal with outside political incitement, and sparked off by an administrative error of judgment of the Federal Army Commander, but a soldier should not have to make what are political rather than military decisions.

The two Ministers responsible for the Army and Security were criticized as unable to stem the trouble. This is most unjust. The Ministers were little but rubber stamps to the drafts of British advisers; the forces that they could have used to stem a mutiny had been merged in the Army and Police at the British Army's insistence; and their only potential supporters against a mutiny were their distant up-country tribesmen. This now was the turning point. The NLF exploited the difference between the 'Awlaqis who formed a quarter of the force and the rest. But the Army was not politically committed even after the mutiny. The Army feared, and the NLF played on these fears, that FLOSY, if successful, would bring in its PORF army and the Federal Army would lose pay and privileges. They had also seen what the Egyptian invaders had done to the Yemen.

The tortuous course of events that follows, the High Commission's abandonment of the Federal rulers, its negotiations with the Army and secret negotiations with the NLF, is not a very pleasant story. From the information I have collected both from British and Arabs, I am convinced that the British-paid Federal Army was deliberately set to remove the Federal rulers from their Sultanates by the High Commission. Tribesmen who would have rallied to their Sultans could not fight it out with a modern army – the 'Awlaqis tried, and they had their country destroyed. The Sharif of Baihan went to King Faisal to get money to carry on the struggle. While he was in Saudi Arabia, he received a message from Aden telling him that if he returned he would be attacked by British planes – he was not allowed to have a copy of the message. Soldiers in *mufti* staged demonstrations in Baihan and the remaining Sharifs were expelled. In the last days when FLOSY was strongly entrenched in Shaikh 'Uthman and PORF came over the border, the Federal Army drove both these groups out, fighting in the Colony in mufti, pretty likely with British air support outside it. This was represented as a great NLF victory – but it was not *its own* victory. The army declared for the NLF and, of course, it came to power. In the Eastern Protectorate the Hadrami Bedouin Legion is said to have been told that if it did not support the NLF, its British pay would be stopped, but unlike my other information I have neither been able to confirm or refute this. It is no wonder that, after this, King Faisal would ask British visitors if they intended to hand over the Gulf to Communists as was done in Aden.

The NLF, though an urban group, drew some support from the middle-tribal districts, especially Dathinah, and from a larger non-tribal

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element in Abyan. The NLF was composed of three grades of adherents: the hard-core brainwashed man (*multazim*); the friendly to the NLF, the reliable person (*sadiq*); and sympathizers (*ansar*). NLF Marxists pretended to anything suitable to their hearers in typical Communist way, with the Army, with the Civil Service and so on, even showing devoutness with the religious people, moderation with the Saudis and British, taking a different line with each group. This was their "staged" (*marhali*) programme – a Marxist term. In Aden they ultimately liquidated the lot, the Army, the Civil Service, and the religious. They are anti-tribal – they have abolished tribal clubs in Aden, and they are attempting to break up the social order by staging "risings" to hand over land and property to the so-called "oppressed". At the "Corrective Step", as it is called, in 1969, extreme Communists came to the fore, and power is in the hands not of Southern Yemenis, but of the Hugaris of the Shafi'i district of the Yemen Arab Republic. These Hugaris are said to supply the jailers and torturers under the East German security advisers. The South Yemen spying and interrogation system is most efficient. Faisal al-Sha'bi, founder of the NLF, was murdered in his cell, one is told, by a prominent member of the left wing of the NLF, who seized a rifle from a guard and shot him through the head. The Russians are reckoned at two thousand strong and a former officer who served with me in 1940, who has recently come out of South Yemen, has produced what purports to be a secret treaty concluded in 1970 with the Russians,* giving them facilities to use Aden and Socotra as a naval and military base. The British-trained Army has nearly all been dismissed and tribal boys form the new Army, opposed to the old tribesmen, heavily indoctrinated and a real potential danger to Arabia. These young boys may well be the product of the NLF teachers who set out to subvert them under the noses of the British.

Within months of independence the Adenese were openly criticizing the NLF caucus in power. Now the extremists have nationalized even small shops by "phoney" risings of their one or two employees, and a man's house is no longer his own if he leaves it unoccupied. In the golden days of British rule, genuinely golden days, to which South Yemenis now look back, there was an endless stream of criticism of British action in the area. Now the Press here and abroad virtually ignores the present travail of South Yemen. UNO and our own Leftists do not think to demand that the Russians remove themselves from their British-constructed base in Aden.

In his memoirs Harold Wilson has alluded to Mr. Sandys' "unworkable Federation". Now certainly federation of tribes often inimical to one another is not easy to achieve, but the peaceful condition of Hadramawt in 1964 after some twenty-five years of British rule shows what can be done. Labour hostility weakened and undermined the Federation, and eventually Harold Wilson abandoned all undertakings to the chiefs, and instructed the High Commission to hand over to the strongest party in Aden. All the evidence at my disposal indicates that the High Commission saw to it that it was the NLF Communist group that was left in power.

* Al-Shaikh Husain Mansur yakshif fi Bairut qissat al-mu'ahadat al-Sufiyatiyah al-'Adaniyah, *al-Jadid*, Beirut, 1972, 12 Tishrin I, vii, No. 305.

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NOTE

In a lecture of this kind one is forced to state rather than prove one's points. Some appreciations of situations are based on personal investigations, the results of which I have still not published. Much of the information is based on accounts given me in Jeddah, Taif and San'a' by former officers of the Federal Army of South Arabia, active participants in the events described, by the rulers in exile, by former Arab civil servants, by Yemeni politicians, Royalist and Republican, and many others in South Arabia, Beirut, or the Gulf. I have also had the privilege of invaluable comment of British friends with experience of South Arabia. This information I have tried to correlate with the press and press summaries.

Over the last few years some revealing accounts of the events leading up to 1967 have appeared in Arabic, unfortunately accessible to few readers in Britain. These give candid versions of what happened in 1967 and present a rather different picture from what may be gleaned from the British press (relying mainly on Aden press hand-outs) or from Lord Trevelyan's brief summary in *The Middle East in Revolution* (London, 1970).

Some important Arabic sources are the following:

Ḥamdī Luṭfī, *al-Thawrah fī Janūb al-Yaman al-muḥtall*, Cairo, 1967. Egyptian, pro-FLOSY, deals also with Radfan.

ʿAbdullāh al-Jābirī, *al-Janūb al-ʿArabī fī sanawāt al-shiddah*, without date or place of publication, but undoubtedly published with a Saudi subvention, and substantially based on material from the Jeddah paper *Nidā' al-Janūb*, and from information also given me by one or more of the officers. It is fairly but not invariably reliable. The author belonged to the South Arabian League.

Muḥammad Ḥasan ʿAwbalī (Obali), *Ightiyāl Brīṭāniyā li-ʿAdan wa-'l-Janūb al-ʿArabī*, no place of publication given, 1971. The author was Minister of Education in the latter days of the Federation. His is an unflattering picture of British actions over the last days of Aden.

Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Shuʿaibī, *al-Yaman al-Janūbīyah khalf al-sitār al-ḥadīdī*, Beirut, 1972. Deals with Aden after the British withdrawal, NLF mis-rule, with a long list of individuals murdered by the NLF.

Al-Mīthāq al-waṭanī (The National Charter). Published in the old Government Press, Tawahi, re-styled the Presses of the Popular Republic of the Yemen. It claims to have been compiled in 1965 but was printed in 1967 or 1968. A major source for the ideology of the NLF.

Qaḥṭān al-Shaʿbī, *al-Istiʿmār al-Brīṭānī wa-maʿrakatu-nā al-ʿArabīyah*, Cairo, 1962. A tendentious account of British actions in the Protectorates, but the events broadly speaking are factually correct. The book was written at a time when the NLF were supported by Nasser.

Sulṭān Aḥmad ʿUmar, *Naẓrah fī taṭawwur al-mujtamaʿ al-Yamanī*, Beirut, 1970. Includes an attempt to re-write South Arabian history on Marxist ideological lines.

Nāyif Ḥawātimah, *Azmat al-thawrah fi 'l-Janūb al-ʿArabī*, Beirut, 1968. A Marxist interpretation of events, only of value as revealing the Levantine NLF interpretation of situations. It attacks the relatively moderate South Yemen Government at a time when the South Arabian Army was powerful.

Al-Thaqāfah al-jadīdah. A monthly magazine published by the PRSY Ministry of Information, from about January 1971. Issue No. 12, December 1971, has a particularly revealing article on "The working class and its role in the struggle."

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